

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A flexible support apparatus comprising:

a support base having an opening in one surface;

a mounting ~~means~~bracket having an opening in one surface; and

a permanently bendable solid metal rod having a first end installed in the opening of the support base and fused directly to the support base, and having a second end installed in the opening of the mounting means and fused directly to the mounting ~~means~~bracket.

Claim 2 (original): The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the metal rod is covered by a flexible sheath.

Claim 3 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 2 wherein each of the opening in the support base and the opening in the mounting ~~means~~bracket further comprises a second larger opening into which opposite ends of the flexible sheath are inserted.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a welded joint between the metal rod and each of the support base and the mounting ~~means~~bracket.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 4 wherein each of the support base and the mounting ~~means~~bracket are formed of an ultrasonically weldable plastic material, the first end of the metal rod being welded directly to the support base, and the second end of the metal rod being welded directly to the mounting bracket.

Claim 6 (original): The apparatus of claim 5 wherein the metal rod further comprises a solid metal rod formed of a material selected from the group of materials comprising: aluminum, copper, and copper coated with another metal material.

Claim 7 (original): The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the first and second ends of the metal rod further comprise an upset metal finish.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 4 wherein each of the metal rod, the support base and the mounting ~~means~~bracket are formed of a material that is metal-to-metal fusible by conventional means.

Claim 9 (currently amended): A flexible support apparatus for supporting heavy objects relative to a fixed surface, the flexible support apparatus comprising:

a support base having a substantially tubular aperture;

a mounting bracket having a substantially tubular aperture; and

a permanently bendable solid metal rod having a first end inserted into the tubular aperture of the support base and having a weld joint formed therebetween, and a second end inserted into the tubular aperture of the mounting bracket and having a weld joint formed therebetween.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the support base and mounting bracket are both formed of an ultrasonically weldable plastic material, and the weld joints formed between the metal rod and each of the support base and the mounting bracket further comprise ultrasonic weld joints.

Claim 11 (original): The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the first and second ends of the metal rod further comprise upset surface material.

Claim 12 (original): The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the metal rod further comprise a metal rod formed of a material selected from the group of materials comprising: aluminum, copper, and copper coated with zinc.

Claim 13 (original): The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the metal rod, support base and mounting bracket are formed of aluminum.

Claim 14 (original): The apparatus of claim 9, further comprising a flexible plastic sheath disposed around the metal rod between the support base and the mounting bracket.

Claim 15 (original): The apparatus of claim 14 wherein each of the support base and the mounting bracket further comprises a respective counter-bore substantially concentric with the respective tubular aperture and sized to admit the flexible plastic sheath.

Claim 16 (currently amended): A method for forming a flexible support apparatus, the method comprising:

forming a support base having a tubular aperture therein;

forming a mounting bracket having a tubular aperture therein;

fusing a first end of a permanently bendable solid metal rod in the tubular aperture of the support base; and

fusing a second end of a ~~the~~ permanently bendable solid metal rod in the tubular aperture of the mounting bracket.

Claim 17 (currently amended): The method of claim 16 wherein:

forming a support base further comprises molding a support base of an ultrasonically weldable plastic material;

forming a mounting bracket further comprises molding a mounting bracket of an ultrasonically weldable plastic material; and

fusing first and second ends of the metal rod in the respective tubular apertures of the support base and mounting bracket further comprises ultrasonically welding the first and second ends of the metal rod in the respective tubular apertures of the support base and mounting bracket.

Claim 18 (currently amended): The method of claim 17, further comprising ~~installing a flexible sheath~~ upsetting the metal around first and second ends of the metal rod.

Claim 19 (currently amended): The method of claim 18 wherein:

forming a support base having a tubular aperture therein further comprises forming a second tubular aperture therein that is of larger diameter and is substantially concentric with a first tubular aperture having the metal rod fused therein;

forming a mounting bracket having a tubular aperture therein further comprises forming a second tubular aperture therein that is of larger diameter and is substantially concentric with a first tubular aperture having the metal rod fused therein; and

installing a flexible sheath around the metal rod ~~further comprises by~~ inserting opposite ends of the flexible sheath into the respective second tubular apertures.

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Claim 20 (original): The method of claim 16 wherein:

forming a support base further comprises forming a support base of a weldable aluminum material;

forming a mounting bracket further comprises forming a mounting bracket of a weldable aluminum material; and

fusing first and second ends of the metal rod in the respective tubular apertures of the support base and mounting bracket further comprises aluminum welding the first and second ends of the metal rod in the respective tubular apertures of the support base and mounting bracket.

Claim 21 (original): The method of claim 20, further comprising installing a flexible sheath around the metal rod.